



Coaching, Evaluating and Delivering Constructive Feedback

Topic Thirteen : Keys to Coaching Success Job Aid

Outlined below are some keys to coaching success:

Do more than “check” coaching off your list: As a Manager and an employee of the Commonwealth, you are asked to do a tremendous amount every day. Sometimes when things come around that seem to be in competition with the time you have to do what is already on your plate, the temptation can be to just do what is required and leave it at that. The bad news is that coaching is not something that lends itself well to this attitude. The good news is that coaching really is not a new job, but rather part of what you do every day. It is the application of the coaching lens to everything that you do. By creating a collaborative environment where coaching happens, you can enhance every aspect of your job with the keys to coaching success without creating much more work for you or those around you.

Remember that coaching isn’t just for performance problems: Often, the idea that someone “needs coaching” is seen as code to communicate that something is broken or wrong with that person or situation. If you apply coaching techniques and principles to your high-performers and smooth working situations, you will find that these methods help to propel you and others to higher levels of performance.

Ask more open-ended questions: One of the challenges in developing a coaching approach, rather than just applying what you need in order to get by, is that conversations might take quite a bit longer in the beginning. Using yes/no or leading questions are more efficient in the short term, but they are unlikely to uncover what is really going on in any given situation. This can often lead to problems in the long term. Asking leading questions is also not true coaching, but more like convincing people to see things from your point of view. It can be a struggle to frame the questions appropriately, and this is where some advance planning before the conversation can help you. As you get more comfortable with this approach, the open-ended questions will come naturally and it will not take you as long to prepare. Another challenge can be that open-ended questions uncover issues you may not feel prepared to deal with – emotional issues, or more complex underlying causes to what may seem like a simple problem on the surface. If this happens, take comfort in knowing that identifying these issues more proactively can only help you.

Allow your employees to find “the answer” for themselves: Coaching is sometimes seen as being like sports coaching, where you are giving your team members strategies and telling them to go out and try it and come back to tell you how it went. But one of the keys to successful coaching is to remain open to possibilities. If you have come up with the solution on your own, even if you think it is the “best” solution, the employee does not own it. You need to give them the space to make mistakes, to trust people to try things without micromanaging their decisions. Let them think through their options before you launch in and

try to tell them what to do.

Use “what, how and when” instead of “why”: Often in a coaching conversation or opportunity something comes up that can stop the collaboration in its tracks: the simple act of asking why. Though it seems innocuous, by asking *why* something happened you put the person on the defensive, which runs counter to the collaborative environment that you are trying to create. As long as people are on the defensive, they will not generalize their learning; if they are struggling to answer the question of “why” they are not receptive to new information or guidance from you. To stay in the mode of collaboration, it is better to treat the situation as a bit of a crime scene and investigate it together, asking clue questions such as “what, how and when.” The underlying issue of “why” can be reached as you both come to understand all the other pieces of the puzzle.